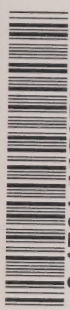


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TODAY'S SECONDARY SCHOOLS: CREDITS WHERE CREDITS ARE DUE



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Ministry
of
Education

Hon. Bette Stephenson, M.D., Minister
Harry K. Fisher, Deputy Minister

What is the “credit system”?

The “credit system” is a system of education that allows you, the student, to choose your courses and put together a secondary school program that is tailored to your present – and future – needs. Under the system, one “credit” is granted upon the successful completion of each course of at least 110 hours of class time. Although that sounds like a lot of hours, you will find that it works out to about the time you would expect to spend on one course during a school year.

Most courses in secondary schools are taught at different levels of difficulty; a course may be offered at the modified, basic, general, or advanced level. (A school generally does not offer all courses at all four levels.) Secondary schools have course descriptions available; read these carefully to see what each level means. Students sometimes overestimate their ability and select too many courses at a high level. You should consider the advanced level only for subjects in which you excelled; other subjects should be taken at a lower level.

What credits do I need to graduate?

The Secondary School Graduation Diploma (SSGD) is awarded to a student who has earned at least twenty-seven credits in secondary school. Most students qualify for an SSGD in four years. During these four years (Grades 9-12) a student must earn credits in certain required subjects. These are:

In Grades 9 and 10

English (or anglais)	two credits
mathematics	two credits
science	one credit
Canadian history	one credit
Canadian geography	one credit

In Grades 11 and 12

English (or anglais)	two credits
Total:	nine credits

Of the total twenty-seven credits, three must be earned in each of the following four areas of study:

- Communications
- Social and Environmental Studies
- Pure and Applied Sciences
- Arts

The division of subjects among these four areas will differ from school to school. For example, graphic arts might be listed under Arts, Pure and Applied Sciences, Communications, or all three; you should find out which subjects are available and how they are listed in your school.

The division of subjects ensures some variety in your program. If you have already chosen a career, it will also allow you to specialize in such areas as business education, languages, mathematics and science, social studies, the arts, or technological education. *Most students wait until Grades 11 and 12 before they narrow their course choices down to a limited number of fields.* Before you start to specialize, be very sure of what you want. Earning a broad range of credits will give you flexibility and allow you to change your mind.

What credits do I need to go to university?

For admission to most Ontario universities and many other post-secondary institutions, you will need to earn the Secondary School Honour Graduation Diploma (SSHGD). This diploma requires six Grade 13 credits. Most students take a total of five years to earn the SSGD and the SSHGD, but some students take less time through an accelerated program approved by the principal and their parents.

If you plan to take Grade 13, plan for it early in your secondary school career. Take as many honour graduation (advanced-level) credits as you can. Many post-secondary institutions require *specific* credits for admission, although the SSHGD is awarded for *any* six credits. In addition, specific credits are required for admission to many post-secondary programs, so be sure that your choice of subjects qualifies you for admission to the post-secondary programs that you may eventually wish to consider. Otherwise you may find yourself cut off from a field of study that interests you.

You can find out more about the admission requirements for post-secondary programs from a guidance counsellor at your secondary school. The counsellor can give you access to the Student Guidance Information Service (SGIS) which has up-to-date lists of entrance requirements. By filling out a computer card, you can ask questions such as “Where can I get training as a jewellery designer?” or “What does a machinist do?” A new service called Vocational Interest Search (VIS) can also be very helpful once you have started secondary school.

Most post-secondary institutions have course calendars, which you will find in the guidance office. Of special interest is *Horizons*, a summary of the programs available at Ontario post-secondary educational institutions. *Horizons* and its French counterpart, *Tour d’horizon*, are also available for reference in the guidance office of your secondary school.

What courses should I consider if I intend to work right after graduation?

If you think that you would like to start working as soon as you finish secondary school but are not entirely committed to a career, it's a good idea to keep some options open. While you are in school, earn as many credits as you can. You can build on these later if you decide to improve your career qualifications or choose a different direction for your life.

In the meantime, your secondary school course calendar will give you information about courses that provide you with marketable skills. They are frequently listed under the headings "technological studies" and "business studies". The calendar may also outline job opportunities open to those who take these programs.

More than forty job-related subjects are offered in Ontario schools. Of course, any one school can offer only a limited selection, but the skills and knowledge you acquire could apply to several related vocational opportunities. If you need more information, speak to a teacher or guidance counsellor.

A word about apprenticeship: The competition to get into some trades is very keen. Many employers require a higher level of academic achievement than the Grade 10 level specified in apprenticeship legislation. Since in order to become an apprentice you have to find an employer willing to train you, it is wise to start your job search before you leave school. When you become an apprentice, you will earn wages while learning trade skills.

What about technological education?

In secondary schools, technological education may prepare a student for post-secondary studies or for employment in a technical job field upon graduation. Some technological courses, however, are broader in orientation and are intended to give students a basis from which to make decisions about further education or merely to satisfy a general interest. Both these general and the more specialized technological courses sometimes provide apprenticeship or modular training credits. Ask your guidance counsellor about the "Linkage" training program.

What about business education?

Like technological education, business education may lead to post-secondary education or a job right after graduation, or it may simply provide background knowledge that will prove useful in everyday life. You will notice in your school course calendar that business courses vary considerably; there are many kinds of jobs available in modern business which require different kinds of training. Many schools offer credit courses at the general and advanced levels in accounting, data processing, marketing, and secretarial studies. Many business studies courses are also offered at other levels.

What is work-experience training?

If you enrol in a course that includes work experience, you will probably spend one or two weeks in the school year learning in a job relevant to your course. This opportunity to experience the job first-hand will show you how the work you have been doing at school is applied in a particular type of occupation.

What is co-operative education?

The main difference between co-operative education and work experience is in the time spent outside the school. In a course that includes co-operative education, a student may spend up to two-thirds of the course time in related work outside the school.

Outside experience varies considerably and may consist of a job in industry, in a store, in a community social service, or in any number of other fields.

Because the experience is carefully chosen for its relevance to the courses you are taking in school, it provides knowledge that can contribute to your earning of credits. Through co-operative education students acquire the skills and knowledge they need to succeed in a job and enrich their education by participating in a training program that complements their classroom study.

If I leave school, can I come back again?

No one will advise you to leave school before graduation. However, some students do leave and return later, after a period of work or travel. Although it is sometimes difficult to adjust to a regular schedule of classes after an absence, students who return often find that their time away has provided them with increased interest and motivation.

Credits are often granted to students eighteen years or older in recognition of experience obtained outside the school. This may include work experience or courses not offered through the public system. To qualify, a mature student must have been absent from school for at least one year. Further information is available from school boards and from the guidance offices of secondary schools.

Attendance regulations now allow parents to apply for early school leaving for children who are fourteen or fifteen years of age. These students are required to take a program prescribed by the Early School Leaving Committee. Further information is available from principals or guidance counsellors.

Can I go to school part-time and work part-time?

Your education will take longer than it would under a regular program, but the credit system is flexible enough to permit such alternative arrangements. Some students supplement this kind of program with summer school, night school, or correspondence courses.

What about summer school?

Summer-school courses were originally intended to enable students to repeat subjects required for promotion to the next grade. You may accumulate credits at summer school to satisfy the requirements for your Ontario secondary school diploma at either the graduation or honour graduation level. (Some above-average students also attend summer school to complete their personal programs sooner.)

Summer study programs should be carefully discussed with your school counsellor. Local school boards or secondary schools can provide further information. These programs have now been expanded to include diploma credit, personal interest, and recreational courses.

More information

Other pamphlets in this series tell more about education in Ontario. For copies, please contact:

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Toll-free calling may be available in your area. Please check the blue pages of your telephone book.